



The Toxic Elephant

Photo by Lisa Kupfer

John Erik Meyer

There are very few Canadians who don't believe that the climate is changing or that human activity is responsible. Many Canadians are aware that Canada's record of greenhouse gas emission (GHG) increases is among the worst in the world. And if asked where the increase in carbon emissions is coming from, virtually every Canadian would say the oil sands.

And they would be wrong. For despite the rapid development of the oil sands and its inherently GHG emissions-intensive nature, they constitute only a fraction of Canada's emissions increase. At about 1/10 of a ton of CO₂ per barrel, the current level of 2 million barrels of oil per day from the oil sands yields 73 million tons (megatons) annually.

In 2015, Canada's emissions are close to 740 megatons, up from 590 mt in 1990. The national increase of 150 mt annually is over double the total emissions from the oil sands. Where is the majority of the increase coming from?

Are Canadians consuming more carbon fuels or are carbon driven industries increasing their output? No. Our industrial base is eroding and we are installing cleaner energy gen-

eration infrastructure. The GHG emissions in Canada are holding fairly steady at 20 tons per person. The increase in Canadian emissions is because there are simply more people living in the country. Population growth has driven the increase in emissions levels to a greater degree than the roundly vilified oil sands.

Canada's population increase is driven almost entirely by mass immigration designed to expand the economy. By taking in nearly 6 million people since 1990, we have expanded our population to 35 million from the 29 million it would have been with balanced immigration levels. Canada's population would have been very unlikely to ever increase beyond 30 million on its own.

With current national policy based on a grow-forever approach, immigration is forecast to keep increasing forever, pushing Canada's population to close to 100 million by the year 2100. In effect, the plan is to drop an additional 30 Torontos on the Canadian landscape by the end of the century.

Adding people and infrastructure is energy and material intensive. Consequently, among many other environmental impacts, GHG emissions go up in lockstep with human numbers.

But the oil sands are the poster boy for environmental carnage – huge pools of toxic waste spread over dozens of kilometers. No picture of environmental destruction on this planet has the same level of visual impact. Add in the highest levels of carbon emissions per barrel of oil produced of any major oil development in the world and we have the embodiment of the near perfect environmental Darth Vader. A 3D bad boy.

As much as the oil sands deserve their horrible environmental reputation, the mass immigration-driven spread of our cities over some of the best agricultural lands in the world takes top spot as the full-spectrum environmental juggernaut.

The trouble is, the people who would normally hand out “the worst in country environmental award” via scathing and continuous editorial comment are the people who profit directly from mass immigration.

Mass immigration, by creating continuously expanding urban markets, with their demand for new homes, cars and electronics, is the advertising revenue lifeblood of media corporations. But only the few make money from mass immigration: developers, cheap labour employers, large retailers, media corporations, and the debt industry. Real wages in Canada have essentially stood still since the 1970s while personal debt has quintupled. Housing costs and finance charges are a large part of this.

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press releases from oil companies in Alberta denouncing the oil sands as the engine of catastrophic climate change.

This media policy of giving a free and unheralded pass to the impacts of mass immigration has an absolutely chilling effect on the technocrats who formulate government policy. How else is it possible to explain how a country misses its emissions targets by such a huge degree? Canada missed its Kyoto targets by more than any other nation save Saudi Arabia. We placed 56 out of 57 in forecast accuracy. We are going to miss our 2020 targets. That takes some doing and is impossible unless the deck is stacked by special interests.

Mass immigration is the toxic elephant in the room that no one mentions for the very real fear of public editorial stoning and complete career dismemberment. But if Canada is to get on top and ahead of its environmental issues as well as the so-

cial, economic and fiscal issues created by an ever-growing population, then the immigration elephant will have to be dragged out and dealt with in full public view.

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